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SUBJECT: UPPER NILE VIOLENCE CONTINUES - WITH ALLEGED POLITICAL AND
ECONOMIC ROOTS

REF: KHARTOUM 029

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: UNMIS/Malakal continues to report fresh violence following an altercation between Dinka and Shilluk tribal members on the margins of celebrations surrounding the 4th anniversary of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). However, NGOs based in Upper Nile's state capital dispute the civilian displacement figures, and claim press reports have exaggerated an admittedly unfortunate incident. Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) parliament members from the region maintain that political forces are manipulating "unabsorbed militias" in the state, and warn against classifying the incidents as inter-clan fighting. Other Juba sources contend the weekend's violence is tied to restive tensions around a poorly-conceived land-grab by Dinka politicians in Upper Nile State, some of whom are supported by Khartoum-based agricultural cooperatives with deep-seated stakes in the outcome of the ongoing process to demarcate the 1956 North/South border. END SUMMARY.

DINKA-SHILLUK SKIRMISH ON CPA CELEBRATION DAY

¶2. (SBU) Police fired live ammunition over the heads of brawling ceremony participants and released tear gas into the Malakal soccer stadium mere hours before Government of National Unity (GNU) President Omar al Bashir and First Vice President Salva Kiir Mayardit arrived to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the CPA's signing on January 9 (reftel). The Shilluk King was the lone official whisked from a VIP pavilion packed with foreign diplomats, Government of South Sudan (GoSS) ministers, and Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) senior command when violence broke out. Reports on the Shilluk King's movements were mixed: some maintain he was moved for his own protection, others contend that he was brought out of the stadium to call for calm between feuding Shilluk and Dinka factions. GoSS Minister for Cabinet Affairs Luka Monoja told ConGen PolOff on January 10 that the groups were jostling for parade placement amidst the heightened excitement of Bashir's attendance. Malakal has been a historically Shilluk-dominated town, and Shilluk performers objected to arriving into the stadium after representatives from the state's Dinka sub-clans. When spears began flying outside the stadium's walls, the Southern Sudan Police Service fired on the crowd, wounding nine. Tear gas was also used. (NOTE: Media reports claiming that two civilians were killed are false. END NOTE.)

CLASHES CONTINUE

¶3. (SBU) Tribal violence resumed in the early hours of January 10 when Dinka from Banglai attacked the Shilluk village of Nagdiar, resulting in its near-total destruction. According to GOAL staff, ten people burned to death in their homes, and survivors fled 25 kilometers to the northern outskirts of Upper Nile's capital of Malakal. UNMIS/Malakal reports that the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission registered 4,679 Shilluk IDPs (NOTE: GOAL manages a health facility in Nagdiar and estimates the village

population to be approximately 1,500-2,000 people. END NOTE.) Although media reports claim that some SPLA have been linked to the violence, no one reached by ConGen PolOff either in Makalal or Juba on January 13 can verify this claim. UNMIS Civil Affairs officials also noted their belief that such allegations were false. Later that same day, alleged Dinka tribesmen attacked the Shilluk village of Lul, killing two and displacing approximately 150. On January 11, police opened fire to dispel a growing mob of Dinka refusing safe passage to Shilluks through a neighborhood. One police officer died during the ensuring altercation.

POLITICALLY OR ECONOMICALLY-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE?

14. (SBU) SSLA MP Henry Akolawin, of Fashoda constituency in Upper Nile State, emphasized to ConGen PolOff on January 13 that the Nagdiar incident was not to be mistaken as "routine tribal violence." Akolawin admits that Shilluk and Dinka tensions have been strained since November 2008 when local authorities, at the direction of NCP Governor Gatluak Deng Garang (a close associate of President Bashir), began exploring the possibility of annexing Malakal town from Malakal County into neighboring (and Dinka-dominated) Baliyet County. Akolawin maintains that the nature of weapons involved in the January 10 violence rule out clan clashes alone. The MP contends that a failed national disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) policy has allowed for "the continued presence of unabsorbed militias" in Upper Nile state. As a result, the presence of a large number of weapons has become a virtual "guns-for-hire" program for "conniving politicians." According to Akolawin, the Upper Nile State Information Minister (and ex-militia commander) should be considered a chief suspect in the recent violence. GoSS Cabinet Affairs Minister Monoja counts

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Khartoum among the possible instigators of the recent Malakal violence, noting that the Southern state "falls under Khartoum's jurisdiction, and people are there chiefly to disrupt the CPA at any cost."

15. (SBU) While Akolawin contends that Khartoum's invisible hand could be at play in Upper Nile State, he also points to more localized and business-motivated roots to the violence. The Fashoda representative alleges Dinka businessmen are trying to construct a "Dinka Kingdom" along the lucrative Renk-Malakal-Sobat corridor, exchanging high-quality agricultural tracts to "Northerners" for self-serving kick-backs. Akolawin alleged that land along the Renk-Malakal roadway has been sold to agro-consortiums with ties to Khartoum. He claimed that the agro-consortium owners have advocated for incremental change to the Upper Nile State border. (NOTE: The South's ability to collect non-oil revenue has been most successful in Upper Nile state, due mainly to the GoSS's successful taxation of sorghum and other crops within Renk and Melut counties. END NOTE.) SPLM State Secretary General John Kor similarly alleged to ConGen PolOff that these same business interests were behind recent advocacy efforts to shift Malakal into Baliyet County. Kor, a Dinka himself, considers the initiative a fool's errand. "Malakal County's borders have not changed since 1956. Why shift them now?"

A DDR PROGRAM COULD HELP

16. (SBU) Akolawin remains a vocal member of the SSLA contingent pressing for newly-appointed SPLA Affairs Minister Nhial Deng Nhial's to appear before the SSLA to explain SPLA efforts to move CPA implementation forward at Joint Defense Board meetings with the SAF. He plans to use this last weekend's violence as fodder for a renewed push by the SPLM within the legislatures in Juba and Khartoum to advocate a renewed focus on the CPA's Security Arrangements. "If anything, it was good that both Bashir and Kiir witnessed this," Akolawin noted, "because now both governments can turn to the question of disarmament so vital within every state along the North/South border. These are militia groups that are organized, using advanced weaponry, and that have had ties at one time or another to either the SAF or the SPLA. They now refuse to integrate into the SPLA because they see no future, and they refuse to put down their weapons because they see no benefit -- this is a

problem that extends beyond the GNU and the GOSS - it is a national problem. "

17. (SBU) Prior to the Dinka-Shilluk violence on January 7, the Upper Nile State Council of Ministers decreed a program of "immediate disarmament" of the entirety of the state's civilian population. The SSPS Inspector General of Police, also present at the VIP Pavilion on the 9th, remained in Malakal through January 14 to assist in disarmament planning. The Inspector General of the Police reports that 14 Dinka have been arrested to date, and credits the Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) with "significantly aiding" in the state government's response to the conflict. JIU, SPLA, and SSPS forces were deployed to form buffer zones between Shilluk and Dinka communities on January 13 and to restore calm. State security officials told ConGen PolOff on January 14 that the situation "was under control." However, despite the heightened security presence, there have been new reports of violence along the Nile's eastern banks, displacing Shilluk migrant families that have had largely undisputed roots to the area for the last decade.

18. (SBU) Comment: The large number of automatic weapons in southern Sudan means that simple disputes can quickly turn into violent and bloody clashes. While tribal violence is a perennial problem in Sudan, and some parts of southern Sudan are particularly prone to violence, the NCP often intentionally feeds the fire of distrust between different groups in order to create chaos among groups and divert attention and anger away from itself. The Dinka-Shilluk violence in Upper Nile has an added economic dimension - the sell-off of land to rich northern agro pastoralists. The fact that different groups resort to violence through the use of arms to settle their disputes, and that the GoS regime can capitalize on this when it suits its needs, highlights the need for a functional disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) campaign in Sudan. To date, the formal DDR program has not gained momentum in southern Sudan, though UNMIS will begin its pilot program in Blue Nile on February 10, and several months later in Southern Kordofan. If these programs are successful, it may provide some incentive for the GoSS to finally allow the formal DDR program to move forward. The budget crisis may also encourage the GOSS in this direction, especially given the generous support for reintegration that is currently envisioned in the UN plan. End Comment.

FERNANDEZ